(c) the action being taken by Government to provide education for the discipline of chartered accountancy as per demand in the country; and

(d) if not, whether Government would take action to ensure availability of chartered accountants as per demand?

THE MINISTER OF CORPORATE AFFAIRS (SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA): (a) to (d) Precise estimates of the number of chartered accountants required in the country at any given time are not available. The requirement for persons having such qualification depends upon the demand for accountancy and audit services in the economy and may vary from time to time.

2. The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India established under the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949, is presently the only Institute which imparts instruction in chartered accountancy courses in the country. There is no prescribed limit of number of seats in the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India. Any eligible student who wishes to pursue the chartered accountancy course can join the course.

3. The Institute has recently taken up the following measures to enhance the availability of chartered accountants:—

(i) Introduction of a new scheme of education in 2006 to facilitate a higher number of students to join the chartered accountancy course.

(ii) Enhancing training opportunities for articled assistants, which is a pre-requisite for the chartered accountancy course.

Upgradation of Jharsuguda Airstrip

*564. SHRI PYARIMOHAN MOHAPATRA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the progress of converting Jharsuguda Airstrip into a regular airport; and

(b) the detailed action plan by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), projected investment and the expected date of completion of the project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) On request from the State Government of Orissa, the existing airport at Jharsuguda is proposed to be developed for scheduled flight operations for which the State Government has been requested to provide 815 acres of land under a Memorandum of Undertakings (MoU). The response of the State Government is awaited.

Investment in R & D activities

*565. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the investment both in amount as well as in percentage in the Research and Development (R&D) activities of various Public Sector Undertakings and institutes under the Ministry;

(b) whether it is a fact that investment in R & D is far below the level required for a country aspiring to emerge as economic super power;

(c) what are the general norms for investment in R & D in various fields under their control; and

(d) how this percentage of investment is comparable with similar undertakings and institutes of the developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) to (d) Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas encourages initiation of Research & Development Projects by the Oil PSUs as also by other technical organizations like Centre for High Technology, Directorate of Hydrocarbons and Petroleum Conservation and Research Association.

All these organizations have their own R&D wings which are Undertaking research projects with the aim to fulfil the energy security aims of the nation. During 2006-07, the PSUs and other technical organizations of the Ministry incurred an expenditure of Rs. 412.87 crore on research and development activities. This amount is approx 0.1% of the combined turnover of these companies.

There are no prescriptive norms for investment in R&D by Oil Sector Companies. Projects for R&D activities are taken up as per perceived needs for development of new products/technologies and resolution of technical issues encountered by the Companies. Over the year, expenditure on R&D activities is on the increase and the Oil PSUs/other technical organizations under this Ministry are being provided all kinds of encouragement for taking up more & more R&D activities.

Contractual workers in national carriers

*566. SHRI PRABHAT JHA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government owned Indian Airlines and Air India are hiring manpower for their works on the contractual basis;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the department where this manpower has been utilized?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The number of contractual employees in erstwhile Air India and Indian Airlines is 105 and 277 respectively. These contractual employees are now working in the National Aviation Company of India Limited (NACIL) into which erstwhile Air India and Indian Airlines have merged, in various departments namely Commercial, Finance/Audit, Security, Ground Supports etc.

Loan Waiver Scheme for farmers

*567. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether instructions have been issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the Loan Waiver Scheme announced in the annual budget;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has taken any decision regarding inclusion of farmers in the scheme, who hold more than 2 hectares of land;